

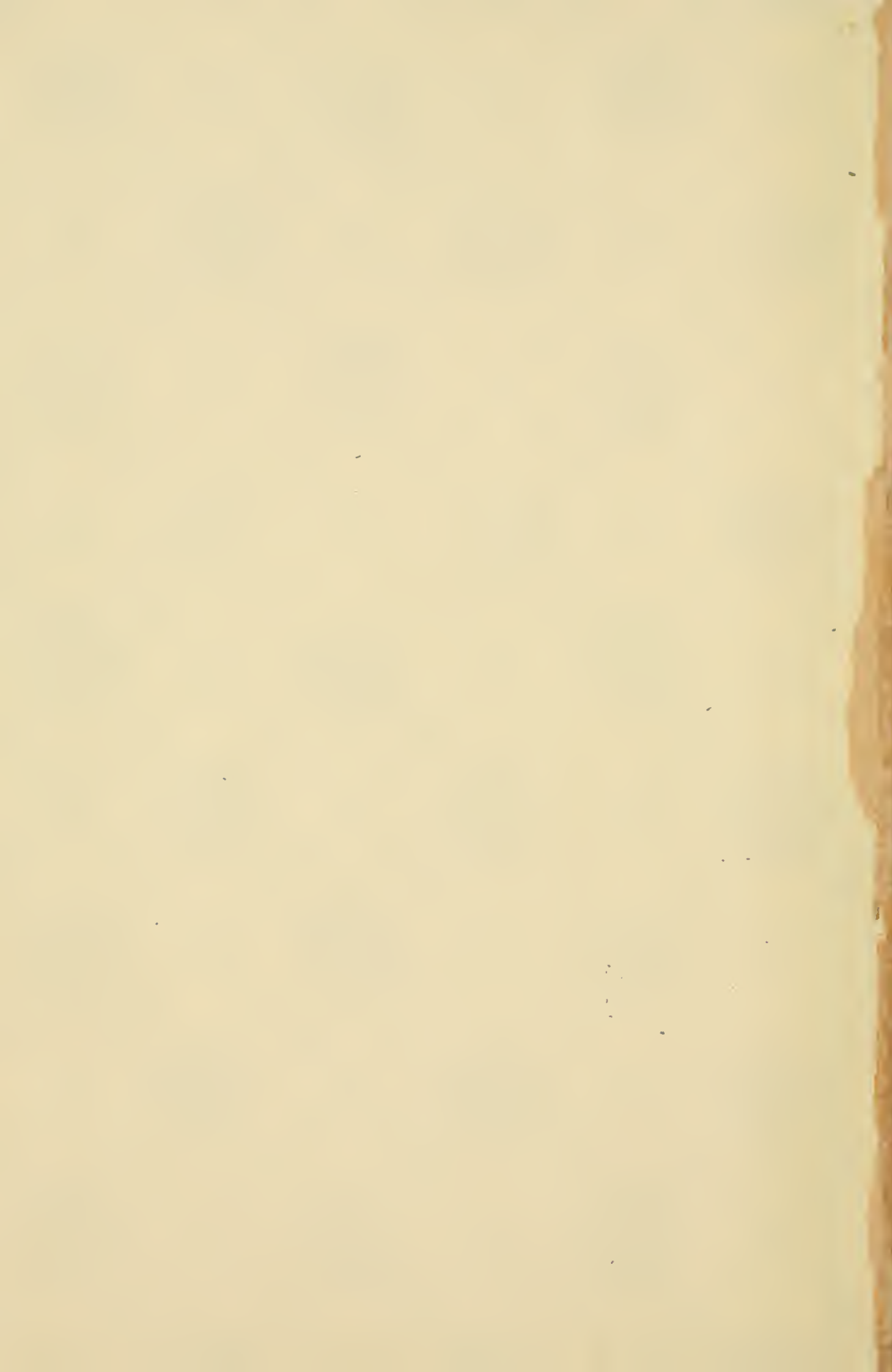
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SOCIAL TRAGEDIES

AND

OTHER POEMS

BY

J. W. SCHOLL

AUTHOR OF

"THE LIGHT-BEARER OF LIBERTY."



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PREFACE.



EVERY life has multiform activities, and when the artistic sense is present, embodies itself in different ways.

A careless judge will be carried away by one single embodiment, and consider the whole, a monotonous enlargement of that single part. The larger-minded reader will see that there is unity which binds all the embodiments together, and that that unity is not an abstraction, but a concrete human life, which, in its constant interplay with environment, expresses itself, always partially, it is true, but always genuinely.

No writer ever gives a complete rendition of his soul. Not even when his work is done and all the broken lights of his life are gathered into one full beam. There is always an inexpressible residue of the personality which perishes from the world.

Emotional life as well as intellectual life has its tropics. There may be wide latitudes between the extreme positions of thought and feeling in a single life at different times. The greater the life, the wider the range. A narrow consistency is possible only in a barren life.

The contents of this little volume grew up side by side with the "Light-Bearer of Liberty" and covers the same period of activity. It claims attention only so far as it finds echoes in the hearts of fellow men, who are yearning for an ideal life, which shall make possible the embodiment of the ideal.

THE AUTHOR.

TO
MY WIFE,
THE SHARER AND INSPIRER
OF
MY LITERARY LABORS,
THIS LITTLE VOLUME
IS DEDICATED.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.



MAUD'S WEDDING DAY.



COME hither a little, Maud, while the shadows creep this way,
Come sit by my side and talk, for the morrow's
your wedding day,

And a younger hand than mine, Dear, will lead
you from my side,
And younger lips than mine, Dear, will claim
you a willing bride,

And you'll leave your dear old home, and my
old loving heart,—
I've lived for you forty years, and loved you
from the start!—

What! You're not so old! But it's true,
though you, Maud, can't understand
How your mother and I were young once, and
thought and yearned and planned,

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

And loved you all together, before our marriage morn,
Full twenty years and more before you, Maud,
were born.

For you were the last, the pet and pride of
mother and me,
And we kept you the baby still, as long as that
could be.

But you wouldn't stay little at all, in spite of
our love and care,
And your dresses were laid aside, Maud, too
small for you to wear.

And I'd have been jealous of all the thieving
years could do,
But they left you your mother's eyes of tender-
est sunniest blue.

There were other children, Maud, and we loved
them dearly, too.
But still, as each babe could talk, another be-
gan to coo,

And life grew stronger and prouder, my Dar-
ling, for mother and me,
And we shared in their work and study, and
toiled for them cheerily.

MAUD'S WEDDING DAY.

But I was vexed, sometimes, when the world
wouldn't seem to go right,
And I said some things, my child, I'd be glad
to recall tonight,

For my thoughts go out to two little mounds in
Sunnyside,
Where the first of our darling children are
sleeping side by side,

And I wonder, if they had lived, if they'd try
to break my heart
As the boy that was spared to me!—The fool-
ish tears will start

When I talk of our only son, that married out
of my life,
And deserted mother and me, for a cold and
heartless wife,

That spoiled in a year or two, with her prim
society ways,
The generous heart of my boy,—'twas the nur-
ture of all our days,—

For mother was patient, Maud, and loved him
and taught him, too,
To be kindly and patient and loving, and al-
ways loyal and true.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

But she was a fortune-hunter, with a pair of
warm brown eyes,
And he was young and loved her,—I thought
it scarcely wise !—

But it wasn't for mother and me to know what
was the best,—
And marrying other people is wisdom's grand-
est test !—

So we wept a little together, and let them go
their way,
And Maud, my Darling, you know the rest.
There came a day

When we quarreled—we couldn't help it—I'm
sorry for all tonight !
I tried to do my best, but the world wouldn't
seem to go right.

And you're the last of all, Maud, for mother is
sleeping, too,
And I am all alone, Maud, in the shadows,
alone with you.

You will stay with me, Darling, you say? No,
that can never be,
For you have a life to live, too, apart from
mother and me.

MAUD'S WEDDING DAY.

She sleeps in the silent ferns, Maud, that you
planted on the hill,
And I'll soon be lying beside her, if gracious
Heaven will,

And I'm not such a brute of a father, to spoil
my Maud's birthright
For the few short years of evening, before I bid
her good night ;

For William's a fine-built fellow with a strong
and manly face,
And he'll be good to you, Maud, and he comes
of a goodly race.

You love him, you say, and he's noble and
loyal and tender and true,
And I love him, too, my child, almost as dear-
ly as you ;

So blessings on both forever, for tomorrow's
the wedding day,
And it matters little how soon now the shad-
ows creep this way.

But when the first babe comes, Maud, remem-
ber us cheerily,
And nestle it soft in the ferns, Dear, for the
sake of mother and me.

THE INVALID.



THE days grow dark and lone, Alice, dark
and dreary for me,
And the years float on like sea-weed adrift on
a stagnant sea.

But there must be currents below, for I know
I am far away
From the purple isles of light where my ill-
starred infancy lay.

I try to be patient and bear the tedium of the
hours,
And take no thought of the morrow, though
Night above me lowers ;

But I can not bear it forever, my soul is rebel-
lious flame ;
Why was an eagle's spirit chained down to this
shattered frame ?

THE INVALID.

Every muscle should have been strong as the
lion's lusty thews,
Whose chase-worn strength the day for each
midnight chase renews !

The blood should have surged in my veins with
a full impetuous tide,
That could nourish power and passion and fling
Life's portals wide

To storm and sun alike, and conquer and use
them both
For the ripening of the brain and the spirit's
dauntless growth !

But a baby's hand is as strong as this withered
hand of mine,
And health and hope are gone, and marred is
the fair design,

The Angel of Life had sketched with his pencil
of seven-hued light,
When my soul burst forth like a star from
Being's primal night.

Three score? Is it blessed to live when all
that is worth the living
Is ruined? So *long*, and remember a deed that
is past forgiving?

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

His blows? His curses? That look? The
tyranny worse than all?
The cloister prison that kept the heart and
brain in thrall

To creeds effete and dead, and systems rotten
and old?
I'd rather be dead as they, and turned into dust
and mould.

For I stood on the threshold of life, in the face
of the universe,
A mendicant begging with hands outstretched
for an alms,—or worse,

A mind misformed and warped, a hand un-
skilled in aught,
The Gordian knot of the world drawn harder
by all I wrought.

And *mine* the fault? If I lounge in the Inn of
the World, and eat,
And pay no reckonings back, is it counted
wrong to cheat

The World of my feed and keep, that robbed
my whole birthright,
And left me naked and bare, unpitied in
wretched plight?

THE INVALID.

Give me my strength, O World ! I'll struggle
along with the rest,
And pay the uttermost farthing, and count all
things as best !

But the days are dark and lone, Alice, so lone
and dreary for me,
As the years float on like sea-weed adrift on a
stagnant sea.

I have friends ? That are kind ? I am grate-
ful to them, to all, to you,
But the bliss is in the helping, and I am all
helpless, too.

If only the struggle were done ! A man with
the passions of man,
I love—Let it pass !—I have loved,—as only
the passionate can,

With the blindness of devotion, with soul and
mind and heart,—
My sister ? I love her as warm, but she has a
life apart !

Her child ? She's the sunshine of life, and fair
as a flower of May,
But the years will make her a woman, and steal
her heart away !

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

Hush, Alice! Sweet Alice, forbid—let it die,
the unuttered word!

No random yearning of mine from its fixed re-
solve has erred,

Never to let a woman turn sympathy into
love

And mingle her fate with mine!—let the inno-
cent snowy dove

Consort with the kite!—Yet I yearn with the
strength of my passionate soul,

To stretch out my arms to something, ere I
touch Time's latest goal,

And clasp it, and call it *mine*, all *mine*, and for-
ever mine!

To love and cherish forever, *mine*, *mine*, warm-
ly faithfully *mine*!

'Twas a dream!—'Tis a dream—that must die
with the dreamer, unfulfilled,

In a heart full of dust and ashes, where the
buds of joy were killed!

The fittest survive, I can see, but little comfort
it gives

To the weakest in the fight, to be conscious of
death while he lives.

THE INVALID.

There a father with light in his face and the
pride of his life on his knee,
Looks Fate in the face serenely. His race
continues to be.

His name will be heard for ages, in honor and
blessing and praise,
And his deeds will be cherished and told
through all the coming days.

And a part of his soul will live, in an everlast-
ing life,
Victorious over death in the never-ending
strife,

But my race must perish, at last, and none will
weep for me,
If I overlive the few who have loved me faith-
fully.

Turn mad? And berate the world? And
curse the living and dead?
Because they gave me a stone, when I wanted
only bread?

O not while the world has love and peace for
the many, shall I
Despair of the far event, though I may be
doomed to die!

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

And perchance I am part of a plan, a part of
this old world's life
Not utterly lost and forgotten, though con-
quered in the strife,

And who can know, but someday, when this
broken body is gone,
I may stand an equal chance with the rest, in
the coming Dawn ?

And thus there is peace, sweet Alice, peace
sometimes even for me,
Though the years float on like sea-weed adrift
on a stagnant sea !



AGNES LILIENKRON,
THE FORSAKEN.



TO the sea-shore? Down by the bay? To-
morrow? Going so soon?
Oh to watch the silent ships asleep in the mid-
night moon!

Oh to hear the dip of an oar and the grating of
a keel
And the sound of a step on the shore that my
waiting heart could feel!

Have I ever been there? Yes, once,—years
ago!—I learned by heart
Every turn and wind of the shore!—your par-
don, sir!—tears will start,

But you seemed so kindly, sir,—to have a heart
somewhere—

That I trusted you,—couldn't help it—'twas
your face, sir, and manly air,—

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

And I could have loved you—madly—but I
have no heart, sir, here !—

It's down there, down by the sea-shore, dead,
dead this many a year !

Dead ? As good as dead, though it throbs and
throbs in its endless pain !

He's there !—the lord of my life !—*was* there—
whom I'll never see again !

Perchance he is gone—gone again—and an-
other widowed heart

Is broken and crazed like mine !—Tomorrow,
you say, you start ?

Perhaps you will meet him ! And then, will you
bear him a message from me,

And tell him I love him still, and pine for the
moonlit sea,

And the boat that used to glide like a dream on
the rising tide

Far out on the evening bay—and *he* was by my
side !—

You will think me frail, I know, but I'd sell my
hopes of heaven

To lie in his arms tonight—nor ask to be for-
given

AGNES LILIENKRON, THE FORSAKEN.

If only the day never dawned to tear me away
from him !—

I'd rather be tortured, or burned, or severed
limb from limb !—

Oh the exquisite bliss of yielding to his impassioned will !

Oh the clasp of his mighty arms—I can feel
them holding me still !

Oh the kiss that sent the blood flood-tiding up
to the lips

And coursing and thrilling and tingling from
the heart to the finger-tips !

You're startled ? We were wedded, sir, wedded,
and never a chaster bride

Graced a marriage feast, or sat by her honored
husband's side.

But scarcely a year and a day,—and down by
the moonlit sea

A serpent our Paradise entered, to ruin my love
and me !

An ugly rumor was whispered, that said I
wasn't his wife,

But only a mistress, at best,—and the helpless
innocent life

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

That was nestling under my heart, could never
wear his name,
Nor look the world in the face !—And then a
woman came,

A beautiful haggard face, that had suffered
deeper than I,
And told a pitiful story—of love in the days
gone by—

Of a broken heart--of love by an artful mis-
tress stolen,
Till I cursed the robber, and wept,—her eyes
with tears were swollen !

I asked her the villain's name. With a sob she
turned aside,
Uncovered the face of her babe, and said with
a broken pride :

“There, madam, read in its face the name it
ought to bear!
I've come to ferret him out—the beast in his
seaside lair !

He is here, somewhere, I know. They said he
was seen on the bay—
Came nightly ashore, or rowed for hours where
the shadows lay

AGNES LILIENKRON, THE FORSAKEN.

With his leman in the bow—Have you seen
him, lady?—those eyes,
That face?" I started—'twas *he*!—I ques-
tioned in quick surprise,

His name? Great God! It was *his*!—"Low
slanderer, be gone!" I cried;—
"My husband?" Belike! And *mine*, and
others enough beside!

Has he lured you, too? Ah, well! Be happy
and love him still.
I leave him to you and yours and the curse of a
wandering will.

I would his hand had slain me!—It strangled
two others before—
But my babe and I are doomed to bear one
trial the more.

Farewell!" She said, and was gone. And *he*
was gone! That day
A vessel lifted anchor and sailed and sailed
away,

And never since then have I heard the dipping
of an oar,
And never a grating keel, or the sound of a
step on the shore.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

They brought me home again—a falcon with
pinions clipped—

I heard from him once—he was back where the
splashing oars had dipped.

I tried to run away, but they caught and
brought me here,

A prisoner—held by an oath and a dying
mother's tear !—

My babe ? I killed it, sir, killed it, blighted its
budding life

Before it could dream or know men's jealousy
and strife.

And since then I haven't a heart, but only a
stone somewhere

In my bosom, that weighs me down like a ton
of dead despair !

But a woman is foolish and frail, and cannot
master her will !

I loved him—I worshipped him then—I love
and worship him still.

And I'd creep in the dust to his feet, and plead
to be loved again,

Though he spurned me and gave me instead a
death of infinite pain !

HERMANN SAMSEL.



I OUGHT to be grateful? Ah, well! Is
gratitude only a duty
To be felt by an effort of will? toward a
fiend? or a brute? where no beauty

Of heart or soul impels it? I ought to love her,
I'm told
By a threadbare text of the law, but feelings
are bought and sold

By an equal exchange of love, or an equal bar-
ter of hate,
And the scales are just and true, that mete out
weight for weight,

And they dip with the heft of a hair, while a
god looks on to repay,
Each moment its own perfect guerdon, each
moment its judgment day.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

I ought to honor her? That my days may be
long in the land?

'Twere better I ween, for me, had she stayed
her murderous hand,—

Or better, perchance, had not failed to throttle
my dawning life,—

I never had hated her then nor known this mad-
dening strife,—

Oh that I never had been, that the day of my
birth were dead,

That an infinite night had swallowed forever
this infinite dread

Of being and doing and thinking in endless
mad career,

The sport of an inborn hate, of frenzy and
gloom and fear!

You are happy? and others, too? and a mother's
love has blessed?

And home is as snug and warm as the callow
birdling's nest?

Well, be happy and grateful and good, for such
is your glad birthright,

For the stars that shone on your birth made a
glad and tranquil night

HERMANN SAMSELS.

For the mother who felt on her breast the
touch of your innocent lips
And followed, forgetting her pain, the wander-
ing finger-tips

As they started and grasped at naught. She
loved your faintest breath.
But if she had loathed you, instead, and cursed
you and plotted your death?

My mother? Bone of her bone, and flesh of
her flesh, too true!
And her blood is pent in my veins with a venom-
ous flood-tide, too.

Does that make a mother, forsooth? that like
an outcast bud
She surrendered the protoplasm, and nourished
it with her blood?

It is love, not blood, that makes the soul of kin-
ship, for me,
And loving care makes the mother, as long as
Time shall be!

But why do I rage? I ought to be mute nor
her slumbers molest
When the grass has been green for years that
covers her harmless breast?

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

Harmless? 'Tis hard to say, if the harm is
over so soon,
And the harvest, sown in the years, all garner-
nered with the moon

That wanes o'er the fresh-dug grave ! I feel it
within me still,
That her every loathing thought and murderous
purpose of will

Are built into flesh and bone and burned into
nerve and brain
Till I hate the whole world, and myself, and
gloat o'er its burden of pain,

With a demonish joy that the rest are shut from
their Paradise too,
And the Earth is a crowded bedlam, all mad-
ness through and through.

The years never hear a prayer, and thoughts
are as deathless as deeds,
And never a love or a hate, but bears the hid-
den seeds

Of endless loving and hating. The world is a
growth and a law,
And the dead mold the living, for aye, with
fated perfection or flaw.

Harmless? When I am dead, and my madness
and crimes are dead,
But a poisoned well until—Beware! Hath not
God said:

“Judge not” and “Vengeance is mine”? Yea,
he judged, and I am the curse
He denounced at his judgment day. From a
salt and bitter source

The waters of Marah have flowed. My mother
attempted to slay—
A silk and damask sin, but common enough to-
day—

Her babe,—and wrought for herself a slow and
lingering death,
And Azrael came with the Angel of Life, when
it wailed for breath.

She is under the sod—frail flesh—I’d pity her
if I could—
Perchance she was wronged—and by *him*—who
never understood

How a woman’s soul can loathe, what a woman’s
hand can do,
When the choosing or refusing is a right too
strange and new

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

For the mother to claim,—my *father*, a sleek
conventional soul

Who never was vexed with a doubt that *his*
morals were sound and whole,

Who knew what virtue meant, and prized it in
his home,

And while his passions were stilled, was never
known to roam,

Who was reckoned chaste enough, by the letter
of the law,—

But a woman's heart was breaking—rebellious
demons saw

The empty room in her heart, and filled it with
murderous hate.

And I am her victim, and *his*. A strange un-
common fate?

Thank God if it were! 'Tis enough if *one*
should drain such a cup!

But a million more,—God forbid, that more be
offered up,

While Belial's altar smokes with the blood of
babes unborn,

And mothers with empty arms look cold and
refuse to mourn!

THE BASTARD OF OLD SIR HUGHS.



CAN it be? How *could* he do it? How could
he be so cruel
To rob me and basely defraud me of man's
most precious jewel?

Can it be? Is he father, or uncle? Am I
bastard, or son?
Why did they set me thinking of where my life
begun?

Is it not gall enough to be orphaned twenty
years,
That they give me a father and mother, and a
shame too burning for tears?

Give me my orphanage back! Take away the
brand of shame!
Give me my dead to love, and not the living to
blame!

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

Who called me a bastard? A Voice! A mere
intangible thing
That whispered an ugly guess at the mystery
whence I spring!

Let it pass! None knows! Who can read in
the blank of a passionless face
That deep in the heart are lurking suspicions of
disgrace?

I'll crush it! I'll live it down! I'll bury it all
so deep,
That none but me can know of its awful hidden
sleep!

I bury it? Crush it? Kill it? A thing that
can never die
While a hundred feel it and know it, other than
he and I?

She knows it—his victim—my mother, and
others all around,
For twenty years is too short for all to be under
the ground,

Who knew of the scandal then, and his lascivious
stealth,
But winked and condoned it all, because of his
title and wealth.

THE BASTARD OF OLD SIR HUGHS.

And they'll pass me every day, and smile and
shake their head:

"He's the Bastard of old Sir Hughs, who wandered
before he was wed."

But I rave! It is all a lie, a cruel, hateful lie
Born of a morbid fancy! I'll conquer it bye
and bye!

For I had a mother once. I remember a warm
sweet face
That bent above me and smiled, with a dear
unspeakable grace.

I remember a clear low voice, that crooned
sweet lullabies,
And I loved to lie and listen, with half-shut
dreaming eyes,

Till I fell asleep in her arms. Was it she that
bent above me,—
My mother,—or only a nurse just hired with
gold to love me?

I remember a time when they came,—they tried
to take me away,
And I struggled and clung to her still, and
fought and kept them at bay

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

With endless kicking and screaming, till I
heard a gruff voice say:

“Come, woman, it’s time to go!” Then she
wept and fainted away

And fell on the floor before him. The rest is
all a blur—

I was hurried away—to the North—to the cold
—away from her.

How could they be hard to a mother? Or if it
was only a nurse,

A pest fall on his body, and on his soul my
curse!

And, my name is not Sir Hughs’. If he is my
uncle in sooth,

She must have been his sister, for if he told me
the truth,

He himself is an only son of an old and blooded
race.

Then why have not I, like his son, a full-blown
lusty face,

With eyes like the English skies, and cheeks
like the English rose,

And whiskers of amber ale that froths and
foams as it flows?

THE BASTARD OF OLD SIR HUGHS.

For mine is an ample brow, and features nervous and thin—

Not a trace of English blood, by my glass, from forehead to chin!

He loves me, he said to me once, because I've my mother's face.

Why should *he* love an olive skin and eyes of a duskier race?

Great God! Can it be? Have I guessed it? the horrible branding truth?

He told me of summers in Italy, of wild oats sown in his youth.

Had he loved an Italian maid, or Alpine herdsman's girl,

And fooled her with vows and pledges unmeet for the son of an earl?

Had he left her at length to bear alone their mutual blame,

And give me birth and suckle me into a life of shame?

O mother! My blameless mother! Whom too much trust betrayed

To the amorous touch of a brute, who would not be gainsaid!

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

I loathe him, I hate him forever, with a bound-
less burning hate,
That never on earth or in hell shall be glutted
or satiate !

Hate *him* ? Hate a father to whom with all his
faults I owe
My life and all I have been in the happy long
ago ?

For I have been happy, at least, and could be
happy still
If a devilish voice could be muffled by strength
of human will.

For mayhap he is what he says—an uncle, and
nothing to me
But the kindest soul among men !—But why this
secrecy ?

Why not tell me about my mother ? I am mad
with longing to love her !
If dead, let me go and weep with my lips in the
dust above her !

If living,—just God forgive if I wrongly curse
the hand
That tore me away from her, perchance in a
foreign land !

THE BASTARD OF OLD SIR HUGHS.

O clasp me again to thy heart, sweet mother,
and sing me to sleep !
I am tired of this hideous dream !—But it's long
since I saw her weep,

And who knows where she is to-day ? De-
spised ? Adrift on the street ?
And touched with a loathsome pest, and foul
from her head to her feet ?

And driven to shame by him ? I'd kill him if I
knew
Such blood were coursing and tingling my arter-
ies through and through !

Why am I not all to-day that the devils in hell
could wish,
If a double stream of lust had built this quiver-
ing flesh ?

Nay *she* was pure, at least ! *Was* pure ! God
rest her soul,
If one false step in her youth left her body
stained and unwhole !

Go and ask *him* ? Ask *all* ? I dare not. He'd
shrug his shoulders and smile,
He dare not own me the truth, though I guessed
it all the while.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

And I'd choose for one, to suffer the horror of
doubtful blame
Rather than face the blighting knowledge of
certain shame !

And whatever else may come, and whatever else
may be,
All the light and the joy of living is gone for-
ever from me !



VIRGINIUS.



HAVE I ever hated a man? Yes, once, in the
days gone by,
I hated him—hate him still,—and shall until I
die.

His crime? Not a crime at all! There are
things far worse than crimes
That are done, untouched by the law, condoned
by the fledgling times!

Is a murder, that ends a life, half as bad as the
dastardly deed
That makes the soul writhe forever, the heart
incessantly bleed?

Is assault with bludgeon or fist and the purple
aching flesh,
That will heal in a week or two, and be sound
and whole afresh,

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

Half as hard to bear, as the thrust that wounds
a sensitive soul
And leaves its poison to spread till its virus in-
flames the whole ?

Is theft of a purse half as bad as the theft of a
hope or a love
That budded and bloomed as fair as the aspho-
dels fabled above ?

He came with an oily tongue, and a manner so
winning kind,
And an eye that worshipped me, and made me
too too blind,

Till the devilish deed was done. Could I for a
moment dream
That a thing so foul as he so gentle and fair
might seem ?

But his whitewashed face concealed the black-
ness of his heart
Till the plague-spot rotted through,—and be-
trayed his hellish art,—

But the bloom was gone—and her life was
blighted,—a pure sweet child,
My child, my *only* child, by an oily-tongued
villain defiled,—

VIRGINIUS.

Too young to guard herself, too old for the law's
defense,

A fresh young partridge to him, just fatted to
please his sense.

Why didn't he kill her, and end forever her
blighted life?

Or why did not I,—a belated Virginius,—give
her to wife

In the land of shadows and ghosts to the skele-
ton arms of Death?

A kindlier fate than to live, with the withering
poisoned breath

Of social scandal upon her, a mark for lascivi-
ous eyes,

The talk of the town, till the next that falls an
unguarded prize

In the confidence game of life, where honor is
all in all

In a woman's lily soul,—its loss the bitterest
gall,—

But man, the superior brute, counts honor ser-
vility,

The badge of a slavish soul ashamed or afraid
to be free.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

Down with distinctions of sex ! Long live the
Woman, I say !

And a knotted cord for the back of the brute
who dares to lay

Unequal burdens on her ? One code, one brand
for them both !

Let him be shunned like the pest, his fellows all
be loth

To graze the sleeve of his coat ! Let the con-
demnation fall

Upon the source of the woe,—or, lovingly lift
the pall

That hangs o'er his helpless victim ! Hold her
as white as him !

Hobnob with her, too, and forget, and fill Life's
cup to the brim,

And quaff it down ! Vivat ! Fill up her bar-
ren years

With a home, and love, and children, and wipe
away her tears

With Society's silken kerchief. Alas, the brute
is alive

Beneath the washing of culture ! Let her go to
the dive !

VIRGINIUS.

Nay, *my* flesh ! Sweet and clean her soul and
body shall be,
But the world is not large enough to shelter
both him and me !

If his shadow darkens my home, or his foot
shall seek my door,
I'll strike him down where he stands and pay
my hatred's score.



THE WEDDING ANNIVERSARY.



They stood together in curtained gloom,
Husband and wife by the laws decree,
Alone in the face of a crushing doom,
Alone in the bitter agony
Of keeping the law, without a flaw,
Though the spirit of love go unfulfilled,
Guarding the vessel with pious awe
When the choicest wine of life is spilled.

Dumb with an anguish they could not speak,
Mute with a truth they dared not face,
Heart to heart, and cheek to cheek,
They convulsively clung in a long embrace,
As if the years could melt to tears,
And gush away to oblivion,
Leaving but love that doubts nor fears
And the troth they had plighted years ago.

THE WEDDING ANNIVERSARY.

“Uphold me, I faint !” The fated word
Burst from her lips. The woe suppressed
Of her choking voice, his bosom stirred :
“Clasp me close, ay close to thy throbbing
breast !

My heart is bleeding, my soul is pleading,
For words that were spoken so often of yore,
My life in its passionate interceding
Unheard is withering evermore !”

“They said, thou art false, thou art hollow and
cold,

Thou lovest me not, thou art weary of me.
I heard when their slanderous tongues grew bold.
They were false and cruel. I trusted thee.
But I never knew, for thy words were few
And thy brow grew dark when I came to thee,
If deep in its cold thy heart beat true
And cherished its old sweet dreams of me.”

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

“And I wept in silence and all alone,
Alone and unmarked for thy sweet sake,
For thou wert mute and sadder grown,—
I wept at their lies till my heart would break.
Oh Love, give me my love! I ask but for love!
I am dying of doubt,—dying, dying each day,
For a word, for a look, that like rain from above
Could make my poor withered heart blossom
for aye!”

“Thou wert gone from our home so oft, so long,
Thou wert colder and sadder at each return
Till I yearned,—God forgive, if the wish was
wrong!—
As only a mother’s heart can yearn,
For our one dead child with its eyes that smiled,
To come from its lily-nestled rest
And soothe my heart with its presence mild
And cool with its lips my burning breast!”

THE WEDDING ANNIVERSARY.

“Then I thought in my soul—for dull pain warps
The soul’s clear sight with its cheating glass—
’Twere better to be a cold cold corpse
And slumber beneath the quiet grass,
In my darling’s bed, with a stone at my head
To guard forever our dreamless sleep,
And I almost envied the peaceful dead,
At rest, and never again to weep !”

“My heart, though crushed, at first was loth
To dream of a life apart from thee;
But hath God sworn with a mighty oath,
That Law is stronger than Destiny?
Must our marriage vow be held sacred now
When it curses two lives and blesses none?
Must we bear on pinched cheek and brow
The blight of the ten dead years that are
gone ?”

“Look on yon half-veiled portrait! See!
The tender eyes are so full of bliss.
She is dreaming still—ay dreaming of thee,
Of a murmured pledge, and one lingering kiss!
Then look on my tear-sunken eye!
Oh God, had we never loved and wed!
Let us crush forever this formal lie,
And part! I would that I were dead!”

Her weak arms slipped from his close embrace—
He pillowed her head on his trembling knee—
His tears fell hot on her upturned face—
And his white lips quivered in agony:
“They slandered thee, as they slandered me!
They were hellish lies but they burned in my
brain!
O God, forgive! I have murdered thee!”
And he kissed her pale cold lips again!

THE TUNKER MAIDEN.

A MEMORIAL PIECE.



I

HANG on the wreath !
Wind the old battle-flag round his tomb,
Its torn folds sweeping his grave,
For underneath
Sleeps one of the brave !
White roses droop o'er his hallowed dust,
From their dewy lips exhaling perfume,
While the late May winds in frolic blow,
And scatter their petals like flakes of snow
At every fitful gust.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

II

O sacred Memorial Day
When the Nation remembers her dead !
O holy tribute the loyal pay
Of love and tears for the blood they shed !
Let the cannon boom !
While the gray old heroes come
Mustering to the rolling drum !
Make room ! Make room !
For the gallant column marching down
Out of the town
To salute the dead !
Let the prayer be said,
And the farewell gun
Be shot o'er each comrade's grave !
The crowd is gone. The rites are done.
All honor to the brave !

THE TUNKER MAIDEN.

III

Hang on the wreath !
Wind the torn battle-flag round his tomb !
For underneath
Sleeps the dust of the brave !
Lost in earth's sepulchral gloom,
He rests alone,
Unmarked and unknown,
And no martial pageant shall honor his grave,
For the gay young world remembers not,
And his grizzled comrades forget the spot,
But the sun shall fail,
And the moon wax pale,
And the stars of night in darkness set,
Ere the Tunker maiden's heart forget.

IV

Hang on the wreath !
Wind the stained battle-flag round his tomb,
Its torn folds sweeping his grave !
For its stains are red
With the blood of the dead
That sleep the sleep of the brave !
Through thee alone and thy sweet faith,
Fair maid of the loyal heart,
Hath he his part
In the drum's glad beat and the cannon's boom !
Ay ! Bury thy head in the long grave grass,
While the dead dead years in memory pass !

V

Brave hearts and true, all hail !
Blood and treasure
Without measure
Flow around their country's altar,
They, the true hearts, never falter.
Hail, all hail !
Columbia's matchless womanhood !
Never enemy withstood
Such a banded sisterhood !
For their cheers and tears, through the bitter
years,
While the flag was rent in twain,
Love-lighted the gory path of glory,
Till the flag was one again !

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

VI

And thou, sweet maiden, royal hearted,
When thy gallant love departed,
All thy hopes save one were blighted.
'Twas the day your hearts were plighted
That the shot from Sumter frightened
All the slumbering North awake.
All thy peaceful Elders spake
Words of patience and endurance,
With a calm and high assurance
That Almighty God doth rule,
That his ways are dark and hidden,
And to question is forbidden
To the children of Christ's school.
Plain gray-bearded nonconformers
Counseled peace, and counseled quiet
Abstinence from war's loud riot.
Stern descendents of reformers
Prayed for mercy, prayed for peace.
When Satan raged in war's increase,
They thought upon their herds and flocks,

THE TUNKER MAIDEN.

Shook their Nazaritic locks,
And remained at home, secure,
And kept their robes unworldly pure.
But one sweet maiden, loyal-hearted,
When the shot from Sumter boomed,
Heard the voice of God, and started,
For she felt her country doomed,
And a pleading bondman's moan
Grew a deathless undertone
To the cannon's bursting thunder
That rent the Union flag asunder.

“Pray for peace, O reverend Fathers !
Weep and wonder, pitying Mothers !
While the Nation swiftly gathers
Precious gifts of blood from others !
But if we pray for peace, we'll fight for't,
And strive with sturdy right arm's might for't,
And spill our heart's blood with delight for't,
And God will stand upon our right for't,
And bless our loyal brothers ! ”

VII

Hang on the wreath !
Wind the old battle-flag round his tomb !
For underneath,
Wrapped in hallowed earth's embraces,
He sleeps till the day of doom !
He alone of that godly few
The voice of his clear-souled sibyl knew,
Doffed his coat of somber hue,
And donned the Union's patriot blue,
And, taking thy "god speed" full of kisses,
Went to pray with his armed right hand
For the righteous cause of his bleeding land.

Thee for thy daring words they thrust
Out of the church, like a worm of the dust,
Of worldly pride and striving full,
Rebellious 'gainst Christ's gentle rule,
Misled, misleading God's own elect.

Anathema, maranatha !!

VIII

Hang on the wreath !
Wind the torn battle-flag round his tomb !
For underneath
Sleep the hopes of thirty years.
Others have garnered the harvest of tears
That were sown by thee so long ago
In the days of the Nation's doom !
Ay ! Bury thy head in the long grave grass,
While the dead dead years in memory pass,
And a flurry of scented snow
Falls on thy silvered locks below !
Clasp him again in thy arms as of yore,
When, wounded and dying, he came from
the war.
Nurse him patiently now as then.
Kiss him tenderly. Tell him again
How nobly he fought and how brave.
And bless the blood that he gladly gave,
That the flag might be one that was rent in
twain.
Ay ! Weep as his tired eye-lids close !
But the God of nations knows
Thine was the greater sacrifice.
Thou hast paid the richer price
For the victory over his foes !

IX

O sacred Memorial Day
When the Nation remembers her dead !
O holy tribute the loyal pay
Of love and tears for the blood they shed !
Let the cannon boom !
While the gray old heroes come
Mustering to the rolling drum !
Make room ! Make room !
For the gallant column marching down
Out of the town
To salute the dead !
Let the prayer be said,
And the farewell gun
Be shot o'er each comrade's grave !
Farewell ! Farewell ! The rites are done !
Sleep on, Immortal Band, sleep on,
Into the morrow's golden dawn !
Shout for the joy of it, shout,
Ye for whom the battle was won !
Ring, glad bells, ring merrily out,
Ye that knolled when the red blood run !

THE TUNKER MAIDEN.

Huzza! Huzza! Huzza!
All honor to the brave!
But hail, all hail, to the Womanhood
That back of our gallant army stood!
Whose cheers and tears, through the bitter
years,
While the flag was rent in twain,
Love-lighted the gory path of glory,
Till the flag was *one* again!



THE POET'S PROTHALAMION



SWEET Love, my bride and wife to be, come
 thou

And nestle on my heart, for I would give
One half this world, were all its treasures mine,
To hold thee in my empty arms once more,
And I would give it all, though richer far
Than a world of worlds, to kiss thee on the lips
With burning, lingering kisses, till my soul
Grew satisfied, and I would pawn my heart
Still throbbing with its young delirious life,

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

Nor hold my very soul too dear a price
For one embrace or one touch of these lips
On thy white unveiled bosom ! Come, my Love,
My Paragon of women, my heart's Queen,
And Queen of home to be, life's dial points
To where the dewy morning greets the noon !
Too soon our morn will be the afternoon !
Stay not too long, but come ere the dew is gone !
We'll wander hand in hand adown this world
And find somewhere among the haunts of men
A cosy bit of Eden, blooming still
For thee and me ! Come with thy household ways
And dear domestic skill, and at thy touch

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

Some ivy-clambered lodge among the trees,
Or narrow cottage on a nameless street
Were home ! Stay not within thy father's house
To close his eyes into their latest sleep,
Though he hath loved thee dearer than his life !
Stay not to cheer thy mother's faltering age,
Though her heart break to let thee go, but come !
New duty calls thee into larger life !
Dear lips that cannot speak are pleading, come !
Fulfill my manhood ! Slip the leash of fate,
And rise to the full glory of womanhood !
Dost linger still ? My soul is crushed with pain.
I need thee. O sustain me languishing
In this unquenched thirst for life and love !

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

Wake not despair ! Fulfill thy plighted troth !
Couldst thou forget ? Or dreamest thou that love
Is dearer in the bloom than in the gold
Of harvest ? Come into the twilight, down
Among the thick-set pines and cedar-clumps,
And I will pluck a twig, and whisper low
Its deathless message sweet : " I live for thee ! "
And thou wilt lay its fadeless leaves among
The folds of drapery soft, nearest thy heart,
And thank me with a look that would repay
The toil of an archangel. Here, alone,
Imparadised, and lip to lip, none near
Save God to hear me at confessional,
I'll tell thee all my love, and thy chaste ear
Will love the tale, and hold it fair and pure
As that white lily that once lay, at eve,
Like baby lips about the areole
Of each white breast, when thou didst dream
 of lips
That yet should be, and thou didst breathe a
 prayer

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

That brake in twain the alabaster-box
Of womanhood, that all the night grew sweet
With scent of spikenard and rich attar of rose.
Perchance in Passion's aura subtly held,
As in sweet incense, thou wilt feel once more
Love's warm compulsion unto higher things
And come !

I know not when our love begun.
I only know we met beside the sea,
In that vast wilderness of stone, whose piles
Behold the lordly Hudson, where his waves
Make young the hoar Atlantic and upbear
In conscious pride the navies of the world,—
Not pleasure-seekers bent on killing time,
Breasting the surf, or idling on the beach,
Nor bent on conquest, thou, nor vain display,
Nor I on shekels most ignobly got
By wedging ten gaunt fingers in between
The toiler and the eater for the tithes

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

Unearned, that honest toil is doomed to pay
The priests of Pluto for their idle keep.
Four study walls immured us from the world,
Three tiresome flights of steps above the din
And ceaseless thunder of the granite streets,
To learned seclusion, where old Nestor spake,—
Our Nestor,—quiet else save that anon
The chime of Grace church, standing near,
 stole through
The open casement. Equal thirst for truth
Led us to one clear fount. We sought a world
Within the phantom chambers of the brain,
A language sculptured on the plastic face.
We spake; then, first, I felt that I had swung
Across the orbit of some fair new star
That drew me with compulsion after her
To girdle her afar with awed delight.
We spake again; of Avon's deathless bard,
Of Schiller, the beloved Idealist,
Of Milton's mighty music, and the steep
Wild journey of the exiled Florentine,

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

Of him who sung of Arthur and his court,
Of him who told Acadia's exodus
In sweetest verse, of Weimar's eldest bard,
Immortal Goethe-Faust, and many more
Of humbler strain, but fresh from the World-
heart,
And Art drew all my orbit unto thee.
Again we spake ; and chance—or, haply, Fate,—
Drove me to tear aside from the dead years
Their veil, and thou didst see my panting soul
Beating its wings against the mortal bars
Of narrow circumstance, with generous aims,
But bruised and beaten back at every flight,
And thou wert gentle as one knowing pain—
The pain of endless climbing, endless fall.—
At length the low sweet music of thy voice
Brake through the discord, and my wounds were
healed.

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

Thou gavest a talisman—a card and verse—
A trifle, but the world's a trifle too !—
“A flag and chart to guide thy daring craft
Across Life's stormy sea.” And then I knew—
Not pity, pity is for the weak and blind,—
But sympathy, magnanimous and kind.
Thou wert mine angel in a time of need.

Thus, day by day, in sweet communion, fled
The dancing Hours adown their endless cycles,
From dawn to dusk, from dusk to radiant dawn,
From silent greetings unto low adieus,
From sad adieus to early greetings glad,
And yet we dreamed not that our lives were
 paired,
Like double stars, for an eternal flight.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

But once, by haunting memories impelled
Of one false maid—or fickle lass, perchance,
Youth makes a mighty grief of slender stuff,—
I said so bitterly: “I lost all faith—”
I know not whither tended all my thought.
I saw thy look of infinite pain, and read
Thy questioning eyes, but answered not. Next
 morn,
Thy pain found speech, and plead with earnest
 lips
And face aglow, for faith in woman’s love
And trust in woman’s truth, though one were
 false.
And, looking on thy tender pleading lips,
And searching all thy soul in thy clear eyes,—
How bright, how near they beam, dear Heart,
 for mine
Do mirror all their tears and smiles in thine,
And see the laughing cherubim, who stand,

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

As in two gates of Eden to defend
Our love from rude intrusion!—I had sworn
Thou wert the noblest of all womankind,—
The gentlest truest woman of the world.
I cast mine eyes down, smitten with quick shame,
And uttered broken words of faith new-born,
Of trust reawakened from deep lethargy,
And all thy pain grew into radiance.
I felt like some despairing soul that clutched
The stole of its good angel, and so climbed
To Heaven's portals. On that day of days,
No mild-eyed saint at her Marienbild,
No votary of the blessed burning heart,
Learned sweeter reverence than I who stood
O'erwhelmed by the eternal womanhood
That trembled on thy speaking lips, and glowed
In thy lithe form—embodied eloquence.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

From that hour unto this thou wert to me
A world—a hope ! Thou art my world. With thee
Is life and love, though all were dead beside.
Without thee, all were dead and cold and drear.
Lay thy right hand upon my brow ! What warmth
Electric ! Heaven grant it ne'er grow cold—
So cold—and lie across thy cold white breast,
Clasping a lily white, to mock my soul
With resurrection hopes, for hope is none
With my White Lily withered ! One warm kiss,
One touch of thy soft hand on cheek and brow
Is more than all my dreamland interests !
One look of thy confiding eyes in mine
Is dearer than a thousand memories
That linger in the chambers of the dead !

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

The Hours danced on, and, arm in arm, the
Graces,
The sacred Nine, and latest born of Zeus,
All-searching Science hundred-eyed, and Mirth,
And all the nymphs of sunlight, wave and storm
And autumn hills, and the stern Sisters Three,
Wove magic circles narrowing round our steps,
And when of all the Hours the saddest came,
She found us—lovers—Then, Aufwiedersehen !
We could not wholly part. With kindred aims,
Art-conquered to one love of beauty, bound
By sympathy that touched life's deepest chords,
Each trusting each and reverencing each, o'er
such
One Hour alone hath power,—life's Tyrant grim.

Dost thou remember the wee note that begged,—
If naught with thee or thine should tell me nay,—
To know thee longer though so far away ?—

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

The pen dared name thee gentlest, truest, best,
Ere yet my lips dared tell thee face to face !

Hard on an hour of banqueting and mirth
Our parting came. Down by the sounding sea,
We watched the silent ships that o'er the wave
Must bear thee soon to old New England's snows,
And thought how many leagues of land and sea
Must drift between us ere the morrow eve.

We talked of home, and long-gone happenings,
And sunny Southland travels, spake aught else
Save what the heart was full of. Idle words !
For Fate is Fate ! Saidst thou indeed farewell ?
Or was it silence trembling ? Ah, farewell !
A lingering hand-clasp—and, in truth, farewell !

Then homeward bound beneath the evening
star
That westward, ever westward fled ! Ah, me !
I had no home ! The mighty instinct woke

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

That drives the full-fledged nestling from his
down,
And fills his throbbing throat with love-calls loud.
A stranger, I returned to that loved spot
That once was home. Yet, though I sat at ease
In shady haunts well-loved of earlier years,
My heart was restless still, and yearned for
home,—
A vision of quiet Paradise with thee,
That dimmed all nearer joys with roseate hues.

Love grows by silence swifter than by speech,
And oft at dead of night, I whispered soft,—
So soft that only mine own soul could hear ;—
“I love thee.” Once, a vision white, thou camest,
A Dream-Hypatia with hair unbound
And white arms bare, that drew me gently down
And set dream kisses on my sleeping lips

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

That thence grew strong to tell thee my young
love.

"I'll win thee, love thee, live for thee," I said ;
And thy heart answered sweetly ; "Wait and
hope !"

A fountain in the desert, fed afar
In sun-kisst ice or storm-drenched highland
plains,
Once burst from subterranean caverns deep,
Wells forth perennial in the waste of sand,
And builds from dearth an oasis of palm,—
A smile of God,—a kiss of Heaven, set
On fevered lips that thirsted unto death.
And such is love, fed from the heights of Being,
The hidden currents flowing leagues beneath
A waste of life, when lo ! it gushes forth,
And all the waste blooms into garden ! Thus
At the sweet words that half confessed thy love,
My soul became a Garden of the Gods,
Where no base thing could enter in, or dwell.

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

But life is earnest ! And far be it from us
To build on sentiment alone the hope
Of happy golden weddings and the shout
Of children's children in our ample halls !

A dearer thing than passion and more strong
Is love,—not that blind groping thing that grasps
The wheel of Fate, content with idle chance,
But Love, the Argos-eyed, that sees and knows
Life's Inwardness, nor cheats itself with dreams
Of swan-white necks, and languishing sweet eyes,
And fadeless cheeks, and sculptured brows of
snow,

And faultless breasts that quiver at each step
In the gay dance, and finger-tips that run,
Bejeweled, lightly o'er the sounding keys.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

Feeling is life, and love is life intense,
But feeling is sharp pain, and love a burning,
That wastes and withers life itself to ash,
When blindly kindled and all uncontrolled.
Therefore we tore the bandage from Love's eyes,
And gave him Reason for a faithful guide,
And laid our hearts bare to his searching orbs,—
Yea, tore aside the veil from inmost soul,—
That no dark fold might prison secret night.
Let others build on ever-shifting sands !
We chose to build Life's during pyramid
Deep-based in rock ! Let others hotly chase
Love's phantom in the dusk of young romance,
But live to find the real cold and dead,—
A long repenting in the halting years,
A bitter weeping in night-silences,
Or slow decay of noble humanhood
That half besots the soul to low content
With passion's burning but ephemeral joys.—

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

We chose to make Life's bridals chaste and calm,
Where each might look in other's eyes and say;
"I know thee wholly and without reserve."
Romance is gone at sixty, but staid love
Is not unmeet for younger blood. The dross
Burns out in Life's hot crucible, and leaves
The fleckless gold. Why not the gold at first?

Twelve happy moons bore love's swift
messages,
"Exchanging thoughts," we called it laughingly,
Or, "bartering weeds from country hillsides steep
For flowers of city growth." And thus we ranged
O'er every field, rejoiced at every step,
To find our thoughts and lives at one, attuned
In fixed habit to sweet harmony.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

No heavenward-pointing spires, nor Sabbath-
chimes
Need crush to silence or awaken strife.
No priest to shrive, no pastor nice to teach
The way to heaven needed we who heard
The voice of the Indweller, and had stood
Beneath the stars together. Nor could aught
Of state or statesmanship with party gall
Embitter Life's full cup, nor shame our pride
In the Republic's azure-fielded flag
Whose bars of morning herald the new day
Of Liberty, even then when woman's hand
Grasps to the wheel, as sure it must and will,
When earth rolls onward into perfect day.
Nor could the tinsel and regalia
Of secret orders shut within our hearts
One thought, one deed, one joy, we dared not
share.
Nor could ambition tear our lives asunder,
Nor knowledge, nor blue blood, nor lands, nor
gold,

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

Nor honors won, nor aught that blights the most,
And makes the marriage-vow a mockery.
So like, we marveled how two souls could be
So like, and ever growing liker, yet unlike,
Each complementing each, and both, full-
summed,—
The perfect being !

When, at length, we met,
And autumn leaves were falling, and the hearth
Roared cheery to the sighing winds outside,
And the long evenings lulled the earth to rest,
And hours ran swift away in golden sands,
Fate turned her glass. We sat together glad.
“Thou badst me wait and hope. Canst tell me
more ?
I hoped and waited. Is it long enough ? ”

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

I said. I looked, and thy lips trembled sweet ;
“ Yea, long enough ! ” Thy right hand stretched
to me.

I clasped it. Our lips met. I held thee close
To my wild throbbing heart ; “ Till Death us
part ! ”

This was the soul’s true nuptials, all alone
With God for witness.

Since when we have known
No law but Love’s, and thy soul’s purity,
That lifts mine own to ever newer heights,
Interprets it ; “ Whate’er is pure and good,
That makes love richer nor abates nor mars
Our chaste Ideal, shall be free as air
For thee and me.” Yet happy he for whom
The tarrying Hours withhold the marriage morn
A while,—not all too long till the tired heart
Grow sick with waiting,—for Love’s law is
chaste,—

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

Not the sweet anarchy of passion freed,
Nor license bitter-sweet,—and self-avenging,
And stronger than our helmed Themis dreamed
When founding states. Ay, happy he for whom
Love's daily discipline of self-denial
Grows sweet, ere Themis leads the blushing bride
Into the nuptial chamber, and stands guard
With her drawn sword o'er wedded privacy !
Thrice happy he who bides his season well,
Nor hopes for violets in December's flaw,
And apples in the snow of orchard-blooms !

Love hastes not, but unfolds her loveliness,
A modest rose that hides her virgin heart
In tangled frets of emerald moss, till wooed
By the dewy breath and kiss of morning. Thus,
Ere we had learned her thousand dear delights,
Fate tore us far asunder.

Then fair dreams,
Hope-winged and gracious, hovered nightly o'er
Our distant couches, or, delighted, trooped
From room to room, with dreamland effluence

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

Flooding the day. When snow lay on the roof,
And in the Dovecote's haunted chamber roared
The hearth-stone wide, and ample comfort
gleamed

On wall and ceiling, camest thou to me
Familiar sweet. And once the vision plead,
All clinging lip to lip, with tender sighs,
To prove me woman's love, and ease the pain
Of pent-up passion, yet did quickly turn
All sad away and weeping make complaint ;
" Ah, me ! This heart is sealed ! Break thou the
seals,

And bid its living waters flow to thee !
I cannot love thee, Love, till thou love me !
Fell Eden's fruitage down before thy feet,
'Twere little prized ! The winning makes it
sweet ! "

And, when I clasped thee in my passionate arms

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

As sweet Francesca with immortal love
Clung to her lover in the dusks of Hell
When storm-swift shrieking blasts tormenting
drave

The guilty shades athwart the dark abyss,
They fell deceived and empty on my breast
And I awoke. And thus from dream to dream
With endless yearning fled the desolate hours,
Till thou and I were dreams, I thine, thou
mine,—

Thou wert the block of Parian marble white,
My love, the sculptor. I did dream thee fair,
And thou art fair, not like a sculptor's dream
With fixed eyes and bosom motionless,—
A faultless frozen grace,—but Love's rich dream
Where every look and every pose is fair,
And all is life and soul and eloquence.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

When next we met, the strawberries kissed
our lips
With fragrant greeting, and the changeful May
Was slipping into June, and our young lives
Were slipping into June—the month of roses—
What wonder then, if roses burst to bloom
Imperishable as memory and fair
As a child's soul !

The choicest rose that bloomed,
Was love—not love of self nor love of each,
But love of one not *each*, but all of *both*—
Love's soul embodied into tendrils weak
To cling with helpless wants about our lives,
And link them with the touch of baby lips—
A sweet wild rose that clambered o'er our lives
With warm profusion in the dew of June,
Her leaves pearl-treasured, and her chalices
Pale pink with beaded gossamers festooned,
In innocent boldness peeping forth at will,

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

God-honoring and not ashamed of Nature,
Nor envying hot-house queens whose double
 hearts,—
A splendid sepulcher,—enfold no fruit.

Through long day-dreaming fair familiar
 grown,
The Mother-Heart found voice, and thou didst
 hold

My head upon thy breast all tenderly ;
“Some day a child shall nestle where thou liest
And feel mine arm's sustaining warm as thou !”
I looked with questioning joy to thee : “Our
 child ? ”

“Yea, thine and mine, for I have loved it long !”
May He whose dearest name is Love, fulfill
These dreams ! 'Tis long since then, and yet we
 dream

The same dear dreams, and talk of days to come

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

When suitors bashful come to woo our girls
And our own eldest brings his chosen bride
For welcome, or yet later full of pride
Brings home a sunny child all coos and smiles,
And laugh that lovers whose far marriage morn
Still sleeps unmarked in Time's unemptied urn
Should talk of children's children and gray hairs.
Yet still may He fulfill, who love ordained,
These later dreams, for love is infinite
And lives in one the future and the past,
A triune omnipresent fulness—Life.

I laid my hand upon its resting-place
As now—no purer touch was his that spake
“Forbid them not” and blessed each innocent!—
I breathed a burning prayer—such prayers do
make

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

Heaven's harmony—where words are none, but
soul
Is large with thankfulness—that begs no boon,
But overflows with a diviner sense
Of life's sufficiency—the soul's content,
And then I spake ; “God helping thee and me,
Thy child shall be as pure as heaven's breath
On our chaste brows, not gotten in amorous play
Of oft-repeated lust, a child of chance,
Chance loved, chance hated,—oft fore-doomed
to death,
Or hateful vice more terrible than death,
The helpless victim of a mighty sin
That hides its loathesomeness in robes of law !
Nor shalt thou be a slave to my swift wish !
God maketh thee, not me, thine arbiter.
Thou lovest me—'tis all my soul dare ask—

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

And thou shalt be a virgin still, though wife,
Till thine own heart shall plead for motherhood !”
And thou wert glad. A new strange light beamed
forth

From thy rich eyes. That ghastly shadow fled
That frights a noble woman’s soul whene’er
She dreams of marriage, lest the altar be
Belial’s and not Hymen’s. “ May it be !
God helping us” thou saidst ; “ I thank thee
much ! ”

But sweetest thanks were tears wept silently.
After long pause : “ O thou who lovest much,
One boon I ask. This hand whose touch I love,
Whose touch is love, O pledge me that it ne’er
Shall strike the tender flesh of that sweet child ! ”
A word—a look—and thou didst lift my hand
To thy warm lips and cover it with kisses.

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

Then, good night ! A kiss on finger-tips—
A white hand wafted in the dark—good night !

How like a drear November day hath been
Our life ! A gleam of sun through azure rifts
Drunk in by frosted leaves that huddled close
To windward of thick hedges, and in beds
Of purling brooks, and then dull lead for hours !

When next we bade good-morrow and were
glad,
Mid-summer's sun was ushering in the day,
And dull blue lay the far-off woods scarce seen
Athwart the quivering atmosphere that burned
The brittle stubble of broad harvest fields
And rolled the banners of the tasseled corn
And made an oven of the cracking soil.
We fled to the cool margin of the Lake
And the White City for a sennight's rest
In that world's Dream of dreams—the home of
Art.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

We stood on the beach at eve and watched
the waves

Come fawning o'er the sand to lick our feet,
But all the while our thoughts went sailing on
Across the waters till their dark green verge
Bounded the blue of heaven. 'Twas Life's sea
We traversed purple-flecked with shadows swift,
Pale green with spots of sun, or white with crests,
Till her far marge met the eternal blue,
And we forgot the creeping waves. At morn
Upon the Lake's calm bosom rippleless
We rode, and saw afar the wonderland
Whose softened splendors rose above the waves
And hung beneath the waves—a double East
Outrivaling the East—alas that flame
Devoured her mighty pillared gate!—Spread out
Before us lay Man's world, behind us Nature,
And both our home. We entered the grand
Court,

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

We saw, we heard,—no words can utter what,—
We breathed in life and beauty with each breath,
Nor asked of whence nor whither. A whole
world

Had heaped her choicest treasures richly here
Till the stunned senses ached with eager seeing !
But whether resting in rose gardens cool,
Or wandering mid palms and orchids rare,
Or tasting luscious fruits from the Golden Gate,
Or listening music by the broad lagoon
Where the bold fountain triton-like arose,
Or watching Spanish sailors tanned and brown
Reel on the deck of Santa Maria,
Or conning La Rabida's wonders old,
Or loitering amid the dust and mould
Of ancient sepulchers with skulls and bones,
Archaic pottery and carved stones,

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

And curious bronzes with the dead entombed
And after mouldering centuries exhumed,
Or gazing on some giant masterpiece,
Bust or sarcophagus, or statue scarred,
Cathedral altar, or restored facade,
Or bronze Augustus or Minerva helmed,
Or wild Bacchante nude with streaming hair,
Or lingering with mute wonder nigh to tears
Before some canvas where the master's brush
Made suffering immortal, or portrayed
The universal heart-throbs of the race—
All bound us closer, for two souls are knit
By thought's community. Daily we learned
In thousand linked experiences one truth,
To give is blest and to receive is blest,
But doubly blest is sharing!

Soul of Love,
Thy name is sharing! One wild strawberry
shared
Is richer than a lap-full eaten lone,
With no loved lips to grace the ruddy feast,

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

And water quaffed from hands that dipped it up
From gurgling wayside springs for love's sweet
sake

Is cooler to parched lips than unshared ices
Though pure Olympian nectar sparkled there !
Aye when Self waxes Love must slowly wane,
And where Love enters Self is quickly slain.

Love watcheth ever, and my sentinel eyes
Would never lose thee though we wandered wide
Adown the sculptured aisles of Italy
Or in and out the booths of La belle France.
I caught the shimmer of delighted eyes
Across Carrara marbles that did seem
Transparent breathing warm. I caught the gleam
Of dark hair floating by green Latian bronzes.
I saw thee pass the Flowery Kingdom's quaint
And strange monotony of urn and vase.
I watched thee glide among cold Russia's furs
Or gaze on costumings of fabric rare
From Britain's restless hundred-handed looms.
I watched thee winding in and out where'er

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

Thy eager fancy led in palaces
Where art had wedded comfort and displayed
Her nuptial gifts and gorgeous dowery,
When once, half startled, thinking thyself lost,
Thine eyes sought me. Lo! I was watching
 near,
Not with cold spying eyes, but tender glad,
As if their orbs had power to guide and guard.
Then wert thou safe indeed! Though wandering
 far
Thou couldst not drift beyond my faithful eyes!

At length grown weary with the endless maze,
When night had lulled the city's mighty heart,
We wandered down her quiet avenues,
And here and there on porticoes and steps
Sat seeming happy families—God knows,
Who looks behind the scenes, what tragedies
A quiet face can cover and what woes
Unspeakable and sobbing threnodies
A suffering heart can bury—but not one

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

In housed comfort knew so dear a home
As we beneath those star-sown distant skies
Unsheltered save by love. Thus hand in hand
With interchanged confessions murmured low
We reached a slender lodge. I kissed thy brow,
I would have set a crown there, but gross gold
Were far too cheap, and I was poor in gold.
And so a long good-night, my crownless queen !

Thrice through the rifted clouds hath burst
the sun
Since then. Thrice have I crowned thee queen,
and set
A wreath invisible upon thy brow.
Thrice have I greeted thee with silent lips
And thrice alas have waited dreary months
Heart-hungered for a touch of thy white hand,
And saw but letters, or a faded rose,
And heard thy voice in nightly dreams alone.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

Four summers thus have bloomed since first
we met,
And yet our life is love's pure idyl still
Whose dear simplicity and calm content
Grow strong with years. No restless yearning
drives
Life's currents from their fixed and easy course
Through fruitful valleys and broad meadowlands
To mingle in the all engulfing sea !
But once thy soul was burdened with strong grief.
Thou couldst do naught but weep. A long
despair,
Not thine, filled all thy home with the shadow
of death.
Thou wert so crushed, so like a bruised reed
Whose light crest sinks beneath the winds of
fate,

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

And yet my lips were dumb. What are poor words
But rain-drops falling on a broken roof ?
They make a dismal music in the soul,
But the dull shadow sits and grins and leers.
Grief is ne'er healed by words. I only wept.
We wept together till the shadow fled.
And then, so full of tender thankfulness,
So self-reproaching that thy grief should mar
Our few swift moments, thou didst kiss away
My tears, though thine own lashes hung with
 pearls,
And thine own cheeks were wet that touched
 my brow.

But for the rain bright Iris were not born ;
But for wet lashes smiles were meaningless ;
And they who never wept have never loved.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

But when I blamed thee not but loved thee
more
For weeping with thee, smiles brake through
the tears
Like mellow sunrise on a night of storm,
And in hope's radiant dawn we built anew
Our world. We talked of home, the dearest word
Of all the Saxon tongues,—the word whose charm
Has kept inviolate love's precincts fair
And builded deathless realms where men are men
And nursed the heroes whose strong arms have
won
And guarded freedom!—Our own home should be
A Saxon home with all its warmth of love,
Secluded and sequestered from the world,
But broad-hearthed, open-doored to faithful
friends,
And courteous to the stranger, a calm rest
Amid the toil of life, where the tired soul

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

Grows strong for each to-morrow, a retreat
For baffled hearts to throb out their despair
On love's warm bosom—a contented spot
Whose simple furnishings, yet elegant,
Wear not the life away with needless toil,
Where art adorns but not usurps true use,
Nor beauty yields to garish novelty
At beldame Fashion's fickle nod and beck.
“Our home shall be the setting of the gem,”
I said; “nor richer than the stone itself,
For diamonds are not set in massive gold.”
“Nor thou and I the only gems,” thou saidst;
“Cornelia's soul is mine! Give me her
jewels!—

One full rich cluster,—Love's own coronet!—
And what if they inherit little gold?
Manhood and womanhood is wealth enough
To live in honor. Toil can win the rest.
Had our own mothers' hearts closed to so soon,
Nor thou nor I had blessed them for our life.
Thank God, thou wilt not now deny me this,
Nor tyrant-like compel these hands to slay
My unborn darlings!”

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

“ Mine own dream of home !
May these things be ! Long years ago, when first
The great hope dawned in my young manhood’s
soul,
That childish lips should lisp me papa sweet,
And creasy arms should clasp about my neck,
And cheeks should nestle in my whiskered face
For goodnight kisses, a great horror dawned
Like freezing sun-dogs with the winter’s sun,
Lest she, whom I had loved as man loves once
And never loves again, might cheat my heart
And leave our hearth a desert. When our lips
Had trembled into vows, thy heart, I knew,
Held in its loves my life’s fulfillment. Then,
That horror climbed my lips ; but I spake not.
How could I speak that dread, and love thee still ?

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

How dared I ask without impeaching thee
The pledge that thine own hands should never
slay

Our child? But others ! Ah, Thou art not such !
I know thy soul ! But yet, one word from thee,—
One little word,—to drive that shadow back.

I crave assurance where my soul is sure.
Thy pleading tells me all. And, Love, believe,
I yearn to see thine eyes and lips and brow
Reimaged in our children manifold.

“And thinkest thou that I love thine eyes less ?
But motherhood asks not of eyes and brows,
But presses the soft lips to her full breast
Rejoiced in giving life. I will not cheat
My heart of this one joy, nor question long
If the lips be thine or mine, but only ours !”

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

“Sweet lips, and sweeter privilege to touch
Its areoled fulness warm! Would that mine own
Were worth to touch them! Shall our child’s
indeed?”

“How could I cheat those lips of their true
food?

Lo, here! God gave me these two sacred founts.
He gave me womanhood. Then shame on her
Who leaves to kine the task her God assigned.
She is but half a mother and full cheeks
And virgin bust bought with an empty heart
Are costly beauties. Father of my child
To be, my noble Lover, speak to me!
Tell me that motherhood is more to thee
Than virgin bloom! Or, if thy lips are mute,
Take what thine eyes are pleading and thy lips
But now and oft ere now have chastely begged!
Touch these white yoked lilies that still sleep!

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

Thou wilt find speech !” Thou saidst, and drewst
aside
The drapery from thy bosom. My lips touched
Its faultless argent. With thrice happy arms
Then didst thou clasp me, and I heard thy heart
Beat loud and fast. But neither spake nor stirred.
At length I slept. When I awoke thy lips
But pleaded ; “ Bless me !” and I answering
spake :

“ Poor words are mine !” And then with rever-
ent lips ;
“ God keep thee ever pure as thou art now !
God bless thy mind to ever nobler seeing !
God bless thy heart to ever nobler feeling !
God bless thy soul to ever nobler choosing !
God lift thee into noblest womanhood !
God crown thee with thrice blessed mother-
hood !”

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

What makes thee tremble so ? Is it memory
Of that last scene so weary months ago,
But dear and vivid as but yesternight ?
Why dost thou cling with such unwonted warmth
Upon me, dewing neck and face with sighs
That shake thy bosom ? Is it ecstasy,
Or some new holy wish that struggles up
To fill thine eyes with pleading ? Ay, they plead
For love's sweet growth to perfect flower and
fruit !

Then come, sweet Love, my bride and wife to be,
For love halts not in chaste development,
But mounts from grace to grace, from boon to
boon,

Aspiring ever unto newer heights.
Come thou, my Queen, fulfill thy plighted troth !
I'll lead thee proudly to the altar, Love,
And boldly claim thee mine before the world !
Or, if more quiet nuptials please thee best,

THE POET'S PROTHALAMION.

I'll take thee lightly from thy father's hand
Beneath the mistletoe where first our lips
Consented unto kisses and we loved !
This ring be symbol of the gracious bond
That makes us one, not by obedience,
But by strong love ! Then may the burthened
years
Be kind, and when life's winter falls at last,—
As fall it must, with snow on our faint brows,—
Like tired children croon us into sleep
Together, sparing each one deathless grief !



I LOVE THEE.



I love thee !
But only the drooping lids that fell
Over her beautiful eyes could tell
The sweet unrest
Of her maiden breast
While mute on her lips the long farewell
Hung tender and tremblingly.

I love thee !
But only the seething waters heard
In their starlit play the whispered word,
For the harbor bar
Lay faint and far
Like a lessening cloud-bank huge and blurred
On the far off edge of the sea.

I LOVE THEE.

I love thee!
The pine-trees sighed in the autumn wind
With a yearning sad and undefined,
And her rock retreat
At their mossy feet
Dreamed nightly of one left far behind
O'er leagues of twilight sea.

I love thee!
Her lips grew warm, and her eyes grew bright,
Her soul grew strong in its new delight,
For winged words
Like messenger birds
Came flitting across the trackless night
From over the restless sea.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

I love thee !

She came from over the surging main,
A turtle-dove urged by love's sweet pain
 To her distant mate
 Left desolate
Where the dusky woods at eve complain
 Afar from the sounding sea.

I love thee !

Not only the drooping lids that fell
Over her beautiful eyes could tell
 Love's perfect rest,
 But lips were pressed
That never again should say farewell
 Till mute by Life's sad sea.



“ MY OWN WEE WINSOME DEARIE.”



O Scotland's tongue so winning sweet,
So lyric, blithe and cheery,
I'd need thy matchless charms to greet
My own wee winsome dearie !

My lassie is a winsome thing,
A darling bonnie creature,
With eyes that smile and lips that sing,
Matchless in every feature.

My lassie, she is far away,
And I with longing weary
Still eager wait the distant day
That takes me to my dearie !

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

O winsome, wee, my bonnie lass,
Thy ingle blazes cheery !
O call me to thy side, my lass,
To be for aye, my dearie !

I've stood with thee in Summer's sun,
Neath Winter's skies all dreary,
But all the seasons are as one
When thou'rt my winsome dearie !

I've stood with thee in hours of mirth,
When joy smiled on us fairly,
I've wept with thee when "earth to earth"
With grief oppressed thee sairly !

And so with earnest lips we twain
Have plighted vows together —
Ah why should Fate so kind remain,
Yet rudely break love's tether

“MY OWN WEE WINSOME DEARIE.”

And set two mated souls adrift
 Upon the world so dreary !
And yet, I thank her for the gift ! —
 Though parted, let's be cheery !

When I recall the parting smiles,
 The eyes that brimmed so teary,
I'd walk a hundred long Scotch miles
 To call thee once my dearie !



THE MESSAGE OF PRESSED FLOWERS.



AS she turned the leaves of a volume old
With Dante tracing the abyss of Hell
Out of the folds of that book of gold
A withered cluster of heart's ease fell.

She started — and smiled through the gather-
ing tears, —
Down fell at her feet the volume great,
With the seven-fold woe the Bard uprears
In his blighting vision of christian hate.

THE MESSAGE OF PRESSED FLOWERS.

She smiled — for that rude disordered dream
Which the listening ages miscalled divine,
With its lurid dusk and its dusky gleam
Dissolved and paled in her love's sunshine.

She wept — our deepest joys bring tears —
As she thought of a vow and a maiden
prayer
Breathed long ago in the dead, dead years
When she gathered the heart's-ease and
pressed it there.

She tenderly laid them on her breast,
And a tear fell soft on their withered leaves
They brought her a vision, but not unblest ;
She was dreaming of love and summer
eves.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES,

In that warm sweet June so long ago,
 With the lengthening shadows at set of sun,
She stood once more on the old, old lawn,
 And gathered the flowers one by one.

Under the light of the vesper stars
 In the perfect silence of twilight hours,
Under the sunset's purple bars
 She breathed this vow to the listening
 flowers :

“ No vaunting rider of gallant steeds,
 No heartless lord of a foreign land,
No holder of stocks and title-deeds,
 Is the hero that wins my heart and hand ;

THE MESSAGE OF PRESSED FLOWERS.

“But noble and free and broad of mind,
 With a great heart beating for Truth and
 Right
And a voice to plead for humankind
 In their restless struggling for freedom and
 light.”

She kissed the flowers and caressed their leaves
 With a reverent touch of her pure white
 hand
And whispered as one who half believes
 That the fair sweet creatures can under-
 stand ;

“I will fold you away with my thoughts of him,
 I will make you warders of love and faith,
While I wait with a virgin troth to him
 Though waiting and hoping end in death !”

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

As she turned the leaves of the volume old
 With Dante threading the deeps of Hell,
And out of the folds of that book of gold
 The withered cluster of heart's-ease fell,
She smiled — and wept — for the years that fled,
 Had ended their ward in a trothal day,
And she sent her "thoughts " with those flowers
 dead
 To her hero lover far away.
"Take them," she murmured, "my own, my
 Love,
 I gathered them long ago for Thee :
Though I knew Thee not, my own, my Love,
 My heart was dreaming, — yes, *dreaming of*
 Thee."



WHITHER AH WHITHER?



WHITHER, ah whither? I stand alone
Facing the years that are to be!
Ah me! Is there none,
Not even one,
Who will stand by my side and speak to me
And lead the way through the desert lone?

Whither, ah whither? The way is dark
Out through the years that are to be!
Ah me! Is there none,
Not even one,
Whose presence shall be as a soul to me
To make the desert a sunlit park?

Whither, ah whither? The end is far
Out in the years that are to be!
Ah me! Is there none,
Not even one,
Who will reach a strong pure hand to me
To guide and guard like a faithful Lar?

THY HEAVEN.



I F thoughts of me are a heaven to thee
Too dear to leave for another
With gates of pearl and a crystal sea—
A reward for holy pother,

I'll build thee a throne for thy royal own
In the palace of my soul,
And my heart shall be for a blood-red zone
To girdle thy milk-white stole,

THY HEAVEN.

And the orbs of my eyes in warm surprise
Shall be jewels upon thy crown
That beggar the miters in paradise
By the elders of God laid down,

And my breath shall be as a wind from the sea
That winnows the clouds away,
And thy palace and thee shall the genii see
Deep-bathed in a fadeless day.

Ay ! my soul shall be a heaven to thee
Too dear to name with that other,
That still with its pearls and crystal sea
Must be won by a holy pother !



I WOULD THAT MY LIPS COULD UTTER.



I would that my lips could utter
 A tithe of the exquisite pain
That is throbbing and tingling within me
 As I yearn for her presence again.

Ah the world would hear me weeping,
 And mingle its tears with mine,
And its heart would break at each teardrop,
 And bleed with a pity divine.

But I cannot speak for grieving,
 And a dumb prayer for relief
From the endless burden of waiting
 Is the only solace of grief.

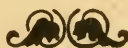
For the heart cannot share its burdens,
 But must bear them forever alone,
And dumbly break like the pitcher
 That falls on the well's curb-stone.

THY BREASTS ARE TWIN WHITE LILIES.



THY breasts are twin white lilies
That bloom immaculate !
Thy lips are sister roses
In blood-red virgin state !
Thine eyes are linkèd stars
In measureless blue deeps !
Thy hair, a brooding night,
Above the lilies sleeps !

I lie amid the lilies
And rest as calm as death,
And the roses kiss my brow
With their attar laden breath,
And the stars from out their azure
Flood all my soul with light,
And o'er my throbbing temples
Falls a cataract of night.



REST, REST THEE, SAD HEART !

(To Miss F. H——, ON THE DEATH OF HER MOTHER).



REST, rest thee, sad heart
That art throbbing in exquisite agony !
Rest, rest thee, O fond heart
That art crushed by pitiless destiny !
O weep, but rest thee, sad heart,
Or thou must break !

Rest, rest, wounded heart,
In the valley of shadows dumb repining !
Rest, rest thee, O fond heart
Like Death on the ruins of Love reclin-
ing !
O weep, and rest thee, sad heart,
Or voiceless break !

REST, REST THEE, SAD HEART !

Rest, rest, troubled heart,
For the clouds, though dark, have a silver
lining !

Rest, rest thee, O fond heart,
In the night of the valley the stars are
still shining !

O weep, but rest thee, sad heart,
Or thou must break !

Rest, rest, lonely heart,
Though the Spoiler has passed, there is
love yet remaining !

Rest, rest thee, O fond heart,
There are hearts that are yearning to
still thy complaining !

O weep, and rest thee, sad heart,
Or coldly break !

Rest, rest thee, sad heart,
O let not thy sensitive spirit deceive thee !

Rest, rest thee, O fond heart,
O refuse not the love that our hearts
ache to give thee !

O weep! Love rest thee, sad heart,
Or ours will break !

TO A RISING STAR.



BEAUTIFUL Star that shinest on me
Out of thy East all gloriously
Lift me out of myself to thee !

Thou art but a star, and less than me
Who am greater than all things else that be
On earth, or in heaven, or under the sea !

I know thou art dust and of little worth—
A glittering waste, a lifeless dearth—
As dull and dead as this bulky earth !

TO A RISING STAR.

I know thou risest, a beautiful slave
Compelled and scourged from the Eastern wave
Though hung with jewels from Ocean's cave !

While I am not dust, nor of little worth,
God's breath informed me, and gave me birth,
And made me master of heaven and earth !

Nor am I a slave of necessity,
I am God's right hand for Eternity,
I think and create and am greatly free !

Yet, beautiful Star, shine down on me
Out of thy east, all gloriously,
And lift me out of myself to thee !



ESTRANGEMENT.



SHE looks a scorn that is far too fine
To disfigure her lips with a sinister curve,
And she hides her heart in its virgin shrine
With an ostentation of woman's reserve.

She is hurt, she says, by my cold neglect,
But vows, as she tosses back my ring,
To prove that a woman's self-respect
Can overlive so slight a thing.

Then her pride breaks down to a tender mood,
In a flood of tears and a gust of sighs,
And she says she is dying in widowhood,
And will soon be at rest where her mother
lies.

ESTRANGÈMENT.

I laugh at her tears and chide her heart,—
 A brute, to laugh at a woman vexed!—
And talk of travels and letters and art,
 And the novel that Scribners publish next.

It is over now. She calls me too coarse
 To sympathise with a woman's life.
She is glad that her fates have done no worse,
 But spared her the curse of being my wife.

We meet down town, but we never speak.
 She floats in a martyr's atmosphere,
And her spirit is all too fine to seek
 A smile from the haughtiest cavalier.

Then she tosses her head in matronly pride
 And walks with her richest Juno gait,
To hint that the nuptial state denied
 Was the blindest grossest blunder of fate.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

She prays that a curse to my life may cling,
Or at least some blighting plague might
take me,
Though she once had vowed on her trothal ring
Never in life or death to forsake me.

We loved,—or foolishly dreamed it was so,—
In the flush and the blush of youth's heydey,
But larger loves must the lesser outgrow,—
Well! such tragedies happen every day!

But the saddest of tragedies comes before,
When lips are touched and low words spoken
That bind young hearts for the evermore
Only to sever, crushed and broken.

But her heart is not broken, her wine is not draff,
She will live to smile at each foolish sigh.
And I—that resigned such a prize—I can laugh.
We were simply mistaken then, Phillis and I.

O'ER MY HEART IN ITS DREAMING.



O'ER my heart in its dreaming the swift tides
of feeling

Like the flood-tides of ocean come surging
and sweeping,

And their melody oft brings the balsam of heal-
ing,

And their turbulence often the marah of
weeping.

Floating wide on those mystical tides of emotion
Old memories like tangles of sea-weed are
drifting,

And hopes that like gallant ships breasted Life's
ocean

Toss a wreck on the surge in its sinking
and lifting.

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

Sweetest dreams float becalmed in the tropics
of being
On a wide surgeless sea idly rolling and
rocking,
Where rich islands of purple are dropped within
seeing
By the mirage of phantasy luring and
mocking.

Rude passions like storms o'er the wild waters
dashing
Drive shoreward like driftwood the white
craft of pleasures
And plunge on gray rocks with a horror of
crashing
Rich argosies freighted with life-giving
treasures.

But faith rides at anchor in havens of blessing,
Calmly rocking above her invisible moorings,
While loves that bore messages fraught with
caressing
Like gay birds return from their airy de-
tourings.

O'ER MY HEART IN ITS DREAMING.

Ah my heart, in thy dreaming, the swift tides
of feeling
Like the flood-tides of ocean come surging
and sweeping!
And their melody oft brings the balsam of heal-
ing,
Though their turbulence often the marah
of weeping!



“LOVE AND WINE.”



MY Goethe sings of love and wine,
My Lessing sings of wine and love,
My muse is something more divine ;
She bids my lips forego the wine
For double draughts of nectared love.

Sing on, my Goethe, love, and wine,
Sing on, my Lessing, wine and love,
My lips refuse your Rhenish wine
But claim the kisses doubly mine
And doubled all the gifts of love.

MY MUSE.



“THE god that touched my lips with song,
That fed my soul with passions strong
Is dead !

The Muse that comforted me long
Is fled !

The radiant days of youth are spent !”
I murmured full of discontent.

And then I looked into thine eyes,
As clear and deep as southern skies
Aglow !—

My Italy !—My Paradise !—
And lo !

The radiant days I lately mourned,—
The dream,—the Dæmon,—all returned !

THE LIGHT OF MY LIFE^{*}



LIGHT of my life, my babe,
With the laughter on thy lips,
With thy restless dimpled feet,
And thy rosy finger-tips.

Whence does the brightness come
That glows in thy dusky eyes,
As they welcome my home-coming glad
With a look of sweet surprise,

^{*} Written by Mrs. Clara Harwood-Scholl.

THE LIGHT OF MY LIFE.

Or gaze with a startled wonder
At the common things of earth,
Not knowing that thy treasures
Are all so little worth?

Yet wiser than thine elders
Who treasure only gold,
Thy little world is gladdened
With riches manifold

Of toy and leaf and blossom
To which a grateful heart
Adds double worth and blessing
That naught else can impart.

Wee image of thy father,
Hast thou his soul within,
A heart like his, still yearning
From every source to win

SOCIAL TRAGEDIES.

Its meed of truth and honor,
 Its wealth of word and deed,
To fashion for thy guidance
 A broad and sunny creed,
That shall leave the soul unfettered
 To grow with each new thought
That comes with Time's swift changes
 Or by the heart is sought !
Thou tiny elfin maiden,
 Come nestle close and warm
On the heart that loves thee best
 Of all in this world of storm,
Of sunshine, pain and gladness !
 Oh may the garnered years
Bring richest store of blessing
 To banish all thy tears !



A Handful of Sonnets.



ALL IN ALL.

I need not fear to trust thee all in all,
So pure, so gentle, and so nobly true,
Thou child of solitudes ! Thy spirit drew
Its richness from the silences that fall
With calm and sweetness on the troubled heart
Thou wert not nurst amid the glare of lamps
A brilliant show, which the gay worldling
stamps
A social queen. Thine is the better part
That naught can take away, true womanhood
Whose effluence as the soft rays that fall
From cloudless heavens and a night of stars,
Silvering the dusk, makes all things fair and
good :
For this I learned to trust thee all in all,
And faith the gate-way of all good unbars.



GREETING.

WHERE shall I greet thee, Love ? In crowded
ways

With throngs whose idle and incurious eyes
Would startle into quick and cold surprise
And quench sweet love with their rude heartless
gaze ?

Nay, rather in some silence let us meet

Where the mute welcome of glad tears may be
And lips may meet in love's sweet privacy
Unshamed and pure ; in some lone loved retreat
Where all chaste hopes unsilenced may be told
And vows replighted speed the hours apace ;
Where arms that waited long, at length may
fold,

Thy yielding bosom in their warm embrace
Nor heed the world's conventions false and cold
While love's sweet breath is dewing neck and
face.



BETROTHAL.

MY pure one, my White Lily, whose chaste
lips

Drank morning dew, where life's cool shadows
brood !

My perfect flower of noble womanhood !
From out thy wanton sisterhood, where dips
With touch promiscuous the lustful bee

Just prizing loveliness for what it yields
When rifled of the treasure that it shields,
I chose thee, spotless one, to cherish thee
Less for ephemeral uses than to fill

Life with perennial sweetness. Love, place
thou

With thy pure lips a seal upon my brow
To keep my thoughts from straying into ill !

Chasten my soul till life's realities
Accord with thy soul's idealities !



LINCOLN PARK, Storm.

I

AGAIN the light spray dashing from the Lake,
Wets all the level pavement by the beach
And beats, wind-driven, in the face of each
A gusty welcome to the merry-make
Of wave and storm. Again the wash and swish
With undertones of thunder and low moans
That mock, like echo faint, old Ocean's tones
When tumbling on his rocks with heathenish
Wild mirth and daring, comes from the far deep,
And silver wave-crests self-dissolving leap
To clasp the errant winds in their mad chase,
But slip back thwarted from the wet embrace
With passion-quenched arms to liquid death
Till quickened by the Storm-king's lusty breath.

II

This is the day, and these the sounds and sights
That smote upon our senses, one sweet morn,
With healing, for our eyes and hearts were
worn,
Art-dazzled by the myriad blinding lights
Of the White City. We had sped away
Behind the clattering hoofs of an ebon span
That beat rude music as they lightly ran
Along the pavement stones in arduous play.
I hear it yet. The moan of breakers steals
Mingled with hoof-beats and the roll of wheels
Into my willing ear. Admiring cries
Burst from thy lips, when the wild waters rise
With sudden leap above the rock-curbed shore
And plunge back head-long with unwonted roar.

III

And fragments of forgotten verse, perforce,
First sung by some old lover of the seas
Utter themselves with song's impulsive ease
From half unconscious lips, from their deep
source
In labyrinthine memory compelled
By the tumultuous beauty, and the wild
Storm-tossed magnificence. Thine eyelids
smiled,
And all thy being rose. Glad I beheld
The light of thy sweet eyes, and glad I heard
The music of thy voice, and drunk each word
With eager spirit in. I hear thee still.
Laugh still, sweet eyes, like two fair stars until
Ye laugh again to mine ! Sing on, sweet lips,
Till dearer Silence, Love's last song outstrips !



SEPARATION.

DAY follows lingering day, on, on, forever,
And I from out my study's cheerless prison
Deep yearning, gaze into each day new risen
And stretch my arms to thee, yet clasp thee
never !

How long—how long—O weary, weary hours
Must I this voiceless separation bear ?
How long—how long, must I withstand
despair

By memory's sweet but evanescent powers ?
These lips, untouched by thine, grow strangely
dumb,

These hands, unclasped by thine, their cunning
lose,

This heart throbs weak, so severed from its
mate.

Once more, Beloved, once more bid me come !
I dare not come to thee if thou refuse,
Yet O with what strong yearning do I wait !



IN THE SHADOWS.

DEAR patient woman, with thy heart of gold,
Strong burden-bearer through the lingering
years,

Whom bootless grief doth often force to tears
But ne'er to weak complainings, manifold
Rich graces wait upon thee ! 'Thou dost hold

Thyself insphered in household ways obscure,
An angel of mercy whom four walls immure
To quiet ministerings, yet, behold !
To those four walls of pain, with beautiful feet
The Presence comes, and thou art grown more
sweet

And tender and more strong. And larger thought
Comes with the visitation, and hath brought
The Vision Beautiful — the soul's ideal,
To woo thee into life's divinest real.



BEYOND THE SHADOWS.

WE know not half the noble worth of life
Till pallid lips, half-parted with the smile
That Death emmarbled as he passed, the
while

Send deathless greetings from beyond the strife !
We know not half the worth of the warm blood
That pulses in us, till those hearts are stilled
Whose blameless love, and passionate yearn-
ing filled

Our veins to bursting with the joyous flood !
Bereft, we stand, the flower of all Time,
The conscious fruitage of ancestral worth !
Her life, grown rich, tides on in thee sublime
And though her dust be welcomed to the
earth

Her spirit dwells in thee, my faithful One !
I'll love and cherish both in thee alone !



A GOLDEN DAY.

THRICE happy Love of mine, this Golden
Day,

Most precious in the heart's whole calendar,
Has filled Life's cup brim full. The sacred
jar

Of wine with mint and honey mingled, nay
The soul's own chalice, brimmed with nectar, lay
Upon my purple lips — for naught did mar
The bliss of that one draught, — and every
scar

Upon my soul was healed and fled away.
Thrice happy Golden Day, on such as thou,
'Twere happy to be born, 'twere blest to die,
'Tis heaven to live, intense, intoxicate,
The god within grown radiant on the brow,
Thrilling the brain and beaming in the eye,—
Best Love, blest Love, I thank thee for
this date!



TIME MARKS HER FLIGHT.

TIME marks her flight with roses and with
snows.

Her Junes and her Decembers come and go
In swift mutation, like the ebb and flow
That daily breaks old Ocean's wide repose.
To-day we wreathe a garland of wild roses
To crown at festival a maiden queen,
To-morrow on her ample brow serene
The gathered snow of four-score years reposes !
We lisp till manhood's prime upon us steals,
Then forge our mightiest aims on life's last
verge.

Alas ! It were a thought too deep for tears,
If Death, the Victor, brake the living seals
Of soul, and all these aims that onward urge,
Rest unfulfilled throughout the eternal
years !



MY BARD.

I would not have thee like to other bards,
To sing aloof from me in far blue heights
A mystic strain of iris-hued delights,
Compelling souls to leap up heavenwards.
I'd have thee lowlier, nearer to the swards
That vault in buried loves, or kiss the feet
Of joyous childhood, ere it runs to meet,
Full-shod, Life's struggles and its stern rewards.
I would not have thee like a mountain peak,
Majestic, cold, oak-girdled, capped with
snows.

Be thou my stately beech-wood, full of ease,
A shelter from Life's heat, where I may seek
The living brook that gurgles and o'erflows.
There, 'mid the flowers, I'll drink and be
at peace.

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